



**OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS**

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

December 28, 2009

Dear Honorable Members of the Illinois Legislature:

As Chairperson of the Violent Crimes Advisory Commission, I am pleased to provide this annual report in accordance with the Violent Crimes Victim Assistance Act. (735 ILCS 240/5). This year's report will focus on victim service programs.

The Office of the Illinois Attorney General administers the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Program (725 ILCS 240), awarding grants to social service and government agencies throughout the state that provide victims and witnesses faster and more complete recovery from the devastating effects of crime. In accordance with the statutory mandate, the Attorney General awards funds to agencies that: assist criminal justice agencies in giving more personal attention to victims and witnesses; sensitize those working with crime victims; attempt to decrease the incidence of unreported crimes; assure victims are informed of the progress of their cases; and encourage public use of services. (725 ILCS 240/2). In FY 2009, the Office of the Attorney General awarded 367 VCVA grants totaling \$7,723,497.00.

Overview of the VCVA Grant Program

In 1984, the General Assembly found "that when crime strikes, the chief concern of criminal justice agencies has been apprehending and dealing with the criminal, and that the victim or witness is frequently forgotten or further victimized by the criminal justice system. Nevertheless, the single most important determinant of whether a case is resolved is the information and assistance provided by the victim or witness." (725 ILCS 240/2). In response to these findings, the General Assembly passed the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Act to help change attitudes towards victims and enhance efforts to assist victims in any way possible.

The Illinois VCVA Program is funded by fees assessed against offenders convicted of violent crimes, other felonies and misdemeanors, and certain traffic offenses. Appropriately, offenders pay to make sure services are funded to assist all victims. Funds are collected by the county court clerks and forwarded to the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Fund in the State Treasury.

In 1985, the first year of the program, 75 grants were awarded totaling \$586,170.21. Twenty-four years later, the number of grants has increased more than fourfold to 367, totaling more than \$7.5 million.

Eligibility for the VCVA Grant Program

Any government or non-profit agency in the state that offers one or more of the following services can apply for VCVA grant funding:

Coordinating volunteers to work with criminal justice agencies to provide direct victim services or to establish community support;

Providing assistance to victims of violent crime and their families in obtaining assistance through other official or community resources;

Providing elderly victims of crime with services appropriate to their special needs;

Providing transportation and/or household assistance to those victims participating in the criminal justice process;

Providing victims of domestic and sexual violence and sexual harassment with services appropriate to their special needs;

Providing courthouse reception and guidance, including explanation of unfamiliar procedures and bilingual information;

Providing in-person or telephone hot-line assistance to victims;

Providing special counseling facilities and rehabilitation services to victims;

Providing other services as the Violent Crimes Advisory Commission shall deem appropriate to further the purposes of this Act;

Providing public education on crime and crime victims;

Providing training and sensitization for persons who work with victims of crime; and,

Providing special counseling facilities and rehabilitation services for child victims of sex offenses. (725 ILCS 240/8).

By law (725 ILCS 240/7), the selection of agencies to receive funding includes consideration of the following factors:

1. Stated goals of applicants
2. Commitment and ability to provide the stated services
3. Number of people to be served and the needs of the community
4. Evidence of community support
5. Organizational structure of the agency
6. Maximization of volunteers where appropriate

The Process

Each year, the Office of the Illinois Attorney General makes available applications for funding through the VCVA Program. Completed applications are due in early February. The VCVA staff in the Attorney General's Office review the applications and present recommendations to the Attorney General. Once final decisions are made by the Attorney General, grant agreements are drafted and signed to reflect the conditions of the award. Agencies are required to submit reports to the VCVA Program on a quarterly basis, and a grant monitor reviews the agency's quarterly reports, conducts site visits and ensures that victims are receiving the services outlined in the agreement. VCVA staff also provide technical and program development assistance to new or expanding agencies throughout the state.

FY09 VCVA Grant-funded Programs

Although VCVA funds are not the sole source of funding for any agency, funding from the VCVA Program often makes it possible for services to exist and to provide assistance to thousands of victims who otherwise would have gone without help. Currently, agencies in 81 Illinois counties receive grants from the Violent Crime Victims Assistance Program. The remaining counties are served by one or more of the funded programs.

VCVA funds are not restricted to any one type of organization. From rape crisis centers to prosecutors' offices, to hospitals, to other community based organizations, VCVA funds are awarded to any agency within a community that has taken on the challenges of providing helpful services to victims of crime. A small number of grants are also awarded to statewide coalitions working to build the capacity of their member organizations to effectively and compassionately assist victims throughout the state.

The 367 VCVA grants provided in FY09 break down into the following program types:

- 2 Bias Violence
- 38 Children's Advocacy Centers
- 23 Court Appointed Special Advocates
- 19 Child Victimization
- 28 Community Based
- 2 Driving Under the Influence
- 85 Domestic Violence
- 7 Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault
- 24 Police Based
- 81 Prosecutor Based
- 34 Sexual Assault
- 19 Senior Victims
- 5 Training & Technical Assistance

A list of FY09 VCVA grants by county can be found on the Attorney General's website at <http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/victims/grantees.html>.

How Can Legislators Help?

Members of the General Assembly can help victims of violent crime in their districts by:

- Making sure agencies providing victim services in your district know about the VCVA Program.
- Referring victim service providers to the Attorney General's Crime Victim Service Division for more information. Call Toll-free—800/228-3368—or check the website, www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/victims/index.html.
- Working with the county court clerks in your district to ensure fees are being collected on a regular basis and deposited into the VCVA fund.
- Participating in coordinated community responses to specific types of violence and to violence prevention efforts.

The Violent Crimes Advisory Commission looks forward to working with the Attorney General and the General Assembly in the coming year to continue to ensure high quality, consistent services for victims across Illinois. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions—312/814-1427, or chora@atg.state.il.us.

All my best,



Cynthia M. Hora
Chief, Crime Victim Services Division
Chair, Violent Crimes Advisory Commission